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## **Minority Public Administrators: Managing Organizational Demands while Acting as an Advocate**

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### **Abstract**

Building on the seminal work of Adam Herbert (1974), this research examines how minority managers navigate the pressures of their organization versus the pressures of their community. Organizational socialization suggests that the socialization process will introduce employees to the goals and priorities of the organization and result in similar behaviors among managers. However, social identities (i.e. race, gender) also significantly influence the values, attitudes, and behaviors of a public servant. Navigating these two competing pressures, minority managers often experience role conflict in their work. We theoretically explore and empirically examine how race affects minority managers' perceptions, behaviors such as networking, and hiring outcomes. We test our hypotheses using 6 years of school superintendent survey data. We find that racial minority managers behave in similar ways to their white peers as they have similar perceptions of their role and goals in the organization, as well as engage in professional networking behavior at similar rates. However, minority managers separately address the interests of their same-race minority community by hiring same-race street-level bureaucrats. As public organizations have grown increasingly diverse, this research revisits the experiences of minority public administrators and contributes to our understanding of how race and social identities contemporarily influence public managerial behaviors.

According to the seminal essay of Adam Herbert (1974) minority administrators face the dual tensions of needing to balance organizational demands with the expectations of the minority community. Organizations quite logically require managers to seek the goals of the organization and to conform to its processes and standard operating procedures. Individual goals and objectives are to be subordinated to those of the organization (Barnard 1938); and individuals who act accordingly are more likely to become managers and move up in the organizational hierarchy (Downs 1967). While surveys have shown that minority administrators seek strategies of compromise between the organization's needs and the interests of minority communities (Murray, Terry, Washington and Keller 1994), no study in the field of public administration empirically illustrates how minority managers might navigate the pressures of their organization versus the pressures of their community to strategically pursue managerial behaviors different than their white peers.

This study theoretically explains and illustrates behavioral differences between minority and white public administrators. Government organizations have a reputation for being more equitable in hiring minorities, however, the number of minority administrators at the very top of the organization is still modest, making the systematic study of the tradeoff that top minority leaders face difficult. This study takes advantage of a long-term panel study of the chief executive officers of school districts to examine whether the managerial actions of minority top administrators (both African American and Latino) differ from nonminority managers. In the process, we can determine how minority managers negotiate the tensions between community expectations and organizational requirements. Theoretically, we will argue that minority chief executives are strategic and they deal with conflicting demands similar to other decision makers, by dealing with the different goals sequentially and separately (see Cyert and March 1963). This

generates the prediction that minority top administrators will visibly manage organizational demands and expectations, but will strategically advocate for minority community interests by responding to the minority community in less visible but equally important ways.

The paper proceeds in three stages. First, we frame the perceived trade-off between organization and community demands in terms of the theories of organizational socialization and identity politics. Second, using classical work on decisionmaking in organizations, we argue that there is a long established process for dealing with conflicting goals and the individuals who succeed in reaching the top of the hierarchy are likely to use such strategies. Third, we present empirical evidence that minority administrators perceive differences in environmental support, craft their outward actions such as networking, the use of performance data, and acting as a policy maker similar to white administrators, but systematically pursue different hiring strategies designed to benefit the minority community.

### **Socialization, Racial Identity, and Public Management**

The influence of race and/or sex on managerial behaviors and decision-making has received some (Forret and Dougherty 2001, Jacobson, Palus, and Bowling 2010, Johansen and Zhu 2016, Opstrup and Villadsen 2015), but limited attention in public management research. One reason for the limited attention on race is that scholars recognize the influence of socialization in shaping managerial behavior. Organizational socialization is the process by which new members of an organization transition from organizational outsiders to organizational insiders (Bauer et al. 2007). This process introduces employees to the goals, priorities, and values of the organization. The socialization of bureaucrats first occurs formally through professional or organizational training programs (Oberfield 2014). Within public education, this

process is evident through educator preparation programs that require educators to illustrate knowledge of data literacy/analysis, apply technology for their field, lead collaboration with education stakeholders, and apply professional ethics/standards (as stated by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation). Upon instilling organizational and/or professional values through training, organizations often guide the execution of socialized behaviors by providing formal incentives that reward socialized behaviors with material benefits, such as pay and promotion. For example, the implementation of accountability standards in public education has caused educator preparation programs to encourage educators to focus on attaining performance metrics. Similarly, once in the job, educators receive pay incentives as their student's standardized test performance improves. These formal incentives become particularly evident in the compensation of school and district administrators.

Beyond formal socialization, organizations may also introduce goals and values through more ongoing, informal socialization procedures (Romzek 1990). Informal socialization includes the learning that takes place outside of the profession or organization. It is often a result of peer relationships, and bureaucrats may engage in learned organizational behaviors in pursuit of nonmaterial benefits such as status, recognition, and peer inclusion (Downs 1967). For example, superintendents' informal socialization can exist in the form of interactions with peer superintendents and mentors. Oftentimes informal networks can provide advice on the unstated behavioral characteristics that are critical to the advancement of superintendent careers (Sharp et al 2004). Although the socialization process will vary across public organizations, socialization suggests that managers, particularly top managers, will engage in similar behaviors – irrespective of the process. As socialization pressures shape the behavior of superintendents (Niño 2018),

some scholars argue that organizational socialization will outweigh the influence of individual identity in shaping the policy attitudes of employees (Meier and Nigro 1976).

Organizational socialization plays an important role in the job of public employees for two key reasons. First, socialization is meaningful in the public context because bureaucrats have discretion to make decisions in providing public services (Lipsky 1980). Highly socialized bureaucrats are expected to accept and behave in alignment with the values and mission of the organization in spite of their individual agency or values that would have them behave differently. In a democratic society with appointed – not elected - bureaucrats, the objectivity of public servants is important for goals of equity and inclusion in public service provision. Differing from the private sector, the democratic nature of public organizations creates expectations of transparency and objectivity. Thus, it is necessary to instill organizational norms that produce systematic and predictable objective behaviors to avoid public critique and work toward unbiased outcomes. Second, the socialization process benefits organizations as it promotes a group identity that helps to build connections, establish trust, and promote collaboration among employees. Because organizations are comprised of individuals with different social identities, experiences, and values, socialization can help to produce a coherent bureaucratic identity among unique individuals (Oberfield 2014). When coherence exists within the organization and individual bureaucrats recognize shared values with their colleagues, the interactions between colleagues and the collective work of bureaucrats is more productive toward organization goals. Scholars find that socialization is associated with positive individual and organizational outcomes including job satisfaction, productivity, individual organizational commitment, and organizational performance (Bauer et al. 2007).

Although the socialization process is important in shaping the behavior of public servants, we argue that scholars should not undervalue the influence of race. Race is a social construct that shapes how individuals understand and respond to the environment around them. How others perceive members of a racial group also shapes the experiences of those who belong to that racial group (Tajfel and Turner 1979). Because of the significant influence of race, people of color have life experiences that are different from those of white individuals. This influence “spills into” the workplace creating differences in career dynamics and experiences (Van Laer and Janssens 2017, Thomas and Alderfer 1989). For instance, recent research on federal employees found that racial minorities were associated with a greater fear of punishment within their organizations (Jung et al 2019). And numerous scholars of public and private organizations have identified differences in job satisfaction, turnover rates, pay, and discriminatory treatment between minority and white employees (Riccucci 2009, Bright 2008, Grissom and Keiser 2011, Greenhaus et al 1990). While most scholars have explored race as a characteristic to consider among many individual controls, few have theoretically explored how racial differences are shaped by environments. Thus, racial identity interacts with our socialization processes and results in differences in the behavior of minority and white employees (Omi and Winant 1994).

Research on the theory of representative bureaucracy and diversity management also highlights the influence of race on the impact and behavior of minority bureaucrats (Grissom, Kern, and Rodriguez 2015). In most cases, the effects of social identity lead to improved performance and more equitable policy outcomes for the clients of public and private organizations (Dolan 2000; Walker and Andrews 2013; Theobald and Haider-Markel 2008, Meier and Nicholson-Crotty 2006). On the other hand, the suppression of social identity in exchange for socialized behaviors of the organization may result in damaging consequences for



marginalized groups (Carroll 2017). For example, in a study of police departments, Wilkins and Williams (2008) found that Black police officers adhere strongly to organizational norms and were associated with *higher* levels of racial profiling than their white counterparts, yielding a bit of a quagmire for minority managers. Relatedly, some studies suggest that Black citizens receive harsher treatment from Black officers (Nicholson-Crotty et al 2017). The work on representation within law enforcement agencies implies that promoting organizational socialization over the individual identity of the bureaucrat may create negative consequences for marginalized groups.

Nonetheless, the identity group an individual belongs to can shape the attitude one has toward bureaucratic practices and culture (Wooldridge et al. 2005). Minority bureaucrats may hold values in conflict with their organizations as a result of lived experiences and historically poor relations between communities of color and public institutions (Hurwitz and Peffley 2005). Bruch and Soss (2018) explain that poor formative experiences with authority early on can shape later dispositions toward institutions. Thus, minority individuals, who have experienced public service delivery at a different level than their white peers (Schafer et al 2003, Kelly 2005), can find themselves caught between pressures to adhere to organizational norms/behaviors and to be advocates for their racial/ethnic communities (Herbert 1974). While much of the literature has presented these two pressures to be a mutually exclusive tradeoff, we expect that bureaucrats can navigate the responsibilities of being a racial representative and the demands of being an objective public servant by engaging in strategic behaviors to balance the pressure.

### **Navigating the Socialization-Identity Vortex**

Our theoretical arguments reinforce Herbert's (1974) contention that community demands and organizational socialization create cross pressures on minority employees. All

managers and employees must demonstrate their value to their organizations; and this effort likely includes incorporation of the norms, processes, and values socialized by the organization. As one moves up the hierarchy, these pressures increase because the organization's leaders are making decisions about how much to entrust the future of their organization to the manager. To be among those considered for the top leadership of the organization, managers must demonstrate an understanding of the organization as well as how to lead it. In recruiting top management, the literature stresses the concept of person-organization fit (Rutherford 2016; Chatman 1989; Goodman and Svyantek 1999; Moynihan and Pandey 2007), the idea that managers need to fit with vision, structure, and processes of the organization. Organizational socialization or the process of recruitment, as a result, will create strong expectations that a top manager will subordinate personal values to the values of the organization (Barnard 1938).

Racial identity creates equally strong pressures on the minority manager. As mentioned, race is a long-lasting and fundamental political cleavage in the US and is associated with major differences in attitudes, opportunities, and life's outcomes. It is trite but true to say an African-American manager has been an African American longer than he or she has been a manager. In the specific case of school superintendents, there is a history of exposure to the persistent racial inequalities in educational outcomes from attendance, to test scores, to dropouts (see Meier and Rutherford 2017). These inequalities exist along race/ethnicity lines and are likely to make social identity salient in the mind of minority administrators.

Pressures from the minority community may also reinforce the impact of identity for minority managers. The school superintendent is a highly visible person and most constituents, parents or otherwise, have opinions on the quality of schools and use those opinions to make school choices for their children (Armor and Peiser 1998; Burgess, Greaves, Vignoles, and

Wilson 2015; Kleitz, Weiher, Tedin, and Matland 2000). Parents likely have expectations that a superintendent who shares their ethnic identity will work to provide better quality education for their children. There are numerous performance indicators in education policy; and data is readily available to the public on many of these indicators, including test scores, graduation and dropout rates, college attendance, etc. Federal law requires the release of this information by race and income and its importance often results in the release of this data being front-page news in local communities. Racial differences in educational policy outcomes should motivate minority parents to expect leaders in the educational realm to take action to improve the outcomes of their children.

We argue the pressures of organizational socialization and racial identity create a vortex of contending and conflicting demands for minority managers, particularly in the educational context. School districts have multiple constituents (the school board, parents, teachers, local business leaders, state and federal officials, etc.) who are interested in the schools' performance. The superintendent is expected to deal with, if not please, all these constituents and advocate for the entire organization. Because of this, constituents and others will likely perceive the aggressive representation of one student group as shortchanging or ignoring the needs of all parents or other constituent groups. The conflict between the pressures will not be total. That is, at times the organization and the community will seek common goals since everyone likes it when *all* students perform better. On the other hand, there are also instances when the expectations of the organization and expectations of the superintendent's same-race minority community appear to conflict for some constituents. Navigating this conflict was the concern of Herbert and the focus of this research article.

Existing organization theory and decision theory provides insights into how a minority superintendent (or any manager) might deal with these conflicting expectations. Multiple and ambiguous goals are a characteristic of public organizations in general (Chun and Rainey 2005; Frank 1958). Organizations tend to break down complex problems into small units, treat the smaller problems separately, and reaggregate the solutions (Simon 2002). A minority manager can follow the same strategy – dividing the performance pressures into those emanating from the demands of the organization and those from the minority community. Managers do many things; for example, managers make public statements, represent the organization to the outside world, assemble budgets and programs, hire personnel, and oversee the day-to-day operations of the organization, among others.

Within this multidimensional myriad of managerial actions, managers have substantial opportunities to respond to either organizational pressures or community pressures. There are many possibilities for how these pressures may interact. Managers may face situations that allow them to deal with both pressures at the same time. On the other hand, managers may seek out places where they can meet one set of demands in a manner that has a neutral impact on the other (or the issue may not be salient to constituents). Moreover, managers may identify actions that are not visible to the organization or the minority community. Because meeting the needs of the organization is the *sine qua non* that is necessary to be in a position to satisfy the demands of the minority community, we hypothesize that highly visible activities such as networking, using performance information, and making policy would conform to organizational dictates. Other more routine and less visible activities, such as recruitment of personnel who may share the superintendent's views on policy actions or strongly identify with the minority community, would allow minority managers to represent the minority community. In short, we refer to this

strategy as “managing organizational demands” (that is, manage visibly in conformance with organizational expectations) but “advocating for minority interests” (that is, staff the organizations with individuals who can respond to the minority community).

### **“Managing Organizational Demands”**

Superintendents as the executive managers of school districts are likely to display similar characteristics in meeting the needs of their organization because they experience similar training and address similar tasks (Carter and Cunningham 1997). Generally, a bureaucrat’s professional training leads to the development of isomorphic behaviors (Teodoro 2014), and there is a great deal of similarities across superintendents. The increased professionalization of education results in requirements for more participation in education training and educational leadership programs. While educational leaders hold a variety of professional backgrounds, between 2010 and 2017 the Texas Education Agency reported that each year more than 67% of school district executives in Texas participated in superintendent preparations via an *in-state*, Post-Baccalaureate degree.<sup>1</sup> Fully 95% of Texas superintendents have a master’s degree and one-half have a PhD, generally in some field of education. Similar training across the profession is likely to result in isomorphic behaviors where superintendents value specific behaviors and policy approaches due to their training toward such management techniques (Carter and Cunningham 1997). One key role of superintendents is policy leadership as district stakeholders look to the superintendent as change agents (Bredeson and Kose 2007; Cuban 1984; Kowalski 2006).

Beyond training, the job of a school district executive also requires that superintendents focus on particular values and pursue certain behaviors. The introduction of *No Child Left Behind* and the continuing wave of accountability standards enforced by the *Every Student*

*Succeeds Act* has brought increased standards of performance to public education. As such, it is likely that all superintendents view the role of state standardized exams and improving educator evaluations as an important goal in their work. Simultaneously, education executives are only one actor among many constituents in their organizational ecosystem. However, as an executive it is their duty to manage constituency groups and maintain positive relationships with actors ranging from state education agencies and teachers' associations to parents and community organizations. Because these actors seek to create influence for the school district, we expect that all managers will engage in networking with various actors in similar ways. Therefore, regardless of one's racial identity, visible managerial behaviors such as managerial networking and perceptions of performance information are likely to conform to organizational norms, as these behaviors are simply a part of a manager's job. Stated as our hypothesis, we expect:

H1: Minority managers will behave similarly to their white peers in visible tasks such as organizational networking, and supporting policy leadership and performance-related goals.

### **“Advocating for Minority Interests”**

Minority managers can also engage in more strategic behavior in order to address the concerns of same-race minority community members. In the educational context, teachers are street-level bureaucrats with significant discretion and close contact with the “clients” of the organizations (i.e. students and their parents). Scholars highlight the importance of a diverse workforce to meet the needs of minority clients (Grissom, Kern, and Rodriguez 2015). Likewise, street-level bureaucrats, such as teachers, have held an important role as policy implementers for

centuries (Lipsky 1980). Diversity in the employees of an organization is critical to ensuring that the interests of traditionally disadvantaged groups are represented (Meier and Rutherford 2017).

There is a longstanding view that a representative bureaucracy is able to meet the needs of a diverse population. The theory of representative bureaucracy offers insight on the effects associated with the “transition” from passive to active representation (Keiser 2010; Kingsley 1944). Scholars note the importance of discretion in the translation (Sowa and Selden 2003) as “bureaucrats must have a sphere of influence to take actions that reflect [their] values...” (Meier and Bohte 2001, 457). There is an established connection between the proportion of minority bureaucrats in a public agency and the outcomes of minority clients (Bradbury and Kellough 2010; Selden 1997). In the educational context, the presence of minority teachers is associated with many important benefits, including lower levels of discrimination for all minority students – not just co-ethnics (Rocha and Hawes 2009; Pitts 2007) and improved outcomes and treatment of students who share their racial/ethnic identity (Lindsay and Hart 2017). The presence of Latino teachers is also associated with improvements in Latino student test scores (Fraga, Meier, and England 1986; Polinard, Wrinkle and Longoria 1990). These benefits make minority teachers an important conduit for addressing the concerns of the minority community.

Since minority teachers do not face as strong of competing pressures as minority managers (much of their work is in the classroom rather than in public) and minority teachers benefit minority students (Grissom et al 2015), minority managers may hire minority teachers as a strategy to navigate the complicated socialization-identity vortex they face. Strategically using the personnel process, managers can hire individuals who share their values. Scholars highlight that there is a correlation between principals’ backgrounds and their preferences for diverse teacher characteristics (Ingle, Rutledge, and Bishop 2011). Minority administrators are generally

associated with the increased hiring of minorities and diversity programming (Konrad and Pfeffer 1991, Doverspike et al. 2000). Similarly, minority managers express a stronger preference for equity-oriented values than white managers (Stazyk et al. 2017; Ospina and Foldy 2009). By hiring minority teachers, minority managers can act to bring about social change within education organizations by promoting more equitable education access and experiences for minority students through minority teacher representation (Nicholson-Crotty and Grissom 2016). In this way, the hiring decisions of minority managers can be strategic because it allows minority managers to engage in behavior consistent with the expectations of the organization, while “putting people in place” (minority teachers) who have the access and discretion necessary to address concerns of the minority community.

Minority administrators may also be more likely to recruit more minority teachers because of regional workforce differences. Considering that a larger percentage of minority school administrators and educators work in urban areas (Brey et al 2019) or regions with a sizable minority population, minority administrators may hire more minority teachers by drawing on the nearest available teacher workforce. In this case, minority administrators would be less influenced by individual biases, but will evaluate job candidates equally. Similarly, minority administrators are often hired in school districts where they can politically connect with and advocate for the local communities of color. Depending on the saliency of issues such as race and diversity in the region, hiring minority teachers may be necessary to maintain community relationships in the district.

Stated as our second hypothesis, we expect:

H2: There will be a positive relationship between minority managers and the presence of minority teachers.



## **Data**

The dataset that we will use to explore managerial behaviors according to race is the Texas Superintendent Survey dataset. Conducted in 2000, 2002, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2011, and 2014, the Texas Superintendent Survey samples every public school superintendent in the state and any scholar who requests the survey can receive it. This survey is distributed by the Project for Equity, Representation, and Governance at Texas A&M University and gathers information on superintendent managerial behaviors, policy preferences, and individual characteristics. In Texas there are approximately 1050 public school districts (charter schools are not included in this total), and each district was sent two reminders in the weeks the survey was in the field. The response rates ranged from 52 to 67 percent.<sup>2</sup>

Next, the survey data capturing individual superintendent characteristics was merged with administrative and performance data requested from the Texas Education Agency. Texas Education Agency, like most state education departments gathers annual administrative and district performance data. We are able to match superintendent behavioral survey responses with district performance data, district demographic characteristics, and superintendent race provided by the Texas Education Agency.

The sample includes 3200 superintendent observations. It is highly representative of the Texas school district population. The mean values for district student population, district performance, and superintendent characteristics are within an acceptable deviation of the population mean values. The mean values for overall performance, Black student performance, and Latino student performance are respectively 75%, 62%, and 68% of students passing the standardized exam. The average district size in the data is approximately 4400 students, and

superintendents have been in their respective positions for an average of approximately 4 years. Additional data on school district performance, district demographic characteristics, and superintendent race are gathered from the Texas Education Agency.

### *Models and Measures*

To explore hypothesis 1 and measure our dependent variable of networking, we factor analyze a group of questions from the survey that ask respondents “How frequently do you interact with: (insert various network actors)?” The network actors included in this question include the school board, teachers’ associations, parent groups, other superintendents, federal education officials, state legislators, and the Texas Education Agency. The superintendents responded on a scale ranging from never (1) to daily (6) for each network actor. The survey responses were factor analyzed and loaded on two factors (see Table 1). The first factor includes the majority of network actors such as, ‘Texas Education Agency’, ‘State legislators,’ ‘parent groups,’ and ‘teacher’s associations.’ We refer to factor 1 as *professional networking*. However, the only network actor that loads well in factor two is ‘other superintendents,’ thus we refer to factor 2 as *peer networking*.

We use OLS regression analysis to test our hypotheses. Equation 1 illustrates networking behaviors as a function of superintendent race ( $R_S$ ), superintendent experience ( $X_S$ ), and multiple district controls ( $C_i$ ).

$$Networking_S = \alpha + \beta R_S + \beta X_S + \beta C_i + p_t + \varepsilon$$

To analyze hypothesis 2, we operationalize the dependent variable of minority teachers as the percent of Black and Latino teachers within the district. Within each year, we calculate the percentage of total teachers that are Black (Black Teachers/Total Teacher (x 100)) and Latino

(Latino Teachers/Total Teacher (x 100)). The mean Latino teachers for the school districts is 10.7 percent and the mean Black teachers within a district is 3.7 percent.

Similar to our prior models, we analyze the data using OLS regression analysis. Equation 2 illustrates an autoregressive model where minority teacher representation is a function of prior representation ( $MinorityTeachers_{it-1}$ ), superintendent race ( $R_S$ ), superintendent experience ( $X_S$ ), and multiple district controls ( $C_i$ ). We account for past teacher representation within the district ( $i$ ) using the lagged percentage of Black teachers and the lagged percentage of Latino teachers. We include this lagged value because on average the representation of minority teachers within a district does not vary widely on an annual basis and prior representation will influence representation in subsequent years. By controlling for prior representation, our coefficients better estimate the influence of superintendent race on current gains in minority teacher representation.

$$MinorityTeachers_{it} = \alpha + \beta MinorityTeachers_{it-1} + \beta R_S + \beta X_S + \beta C_i + p_t + \varepsilon$$

All analyses include time-fixed effects ( $p_t$ ) to control for potential correlation across time. In addition, we include clustered standard errors at the district level. The clustered standard errors will control for potential error correlation between districts.

[Insert Table 1]

#### *Independent Variable:*

In both analyses, the independent variable of interest, race, is measured using two categorical variables for Black and Latino. Our first categorical variable captures the presence of a Black superintendent. We code this variable “1” for Black superintendent and “0” otherwise. We follow a comparable operationalization for our measure of Latino superintendents; our Latino superintendent variable is “1” when there is a Latino superintendent and “0” otherwise.

The omitted or reference category is white superintendents. Within the sample, 90 percent of the respondents are white, approximately 2 percent are Black and 7 percent are Latino. With approximately 3600 cases, these percentages translate to approximately 72 Black and 252 Latino superintendents.

### *Controls*

In both models, we control for superintendent and district characteristics that may influence our outcome variables. Table 2 presents the summary statistics for these variables. First, we include a control for superintendent experience. It is likely that superintendents with more experience have developed expertise on how to interact with various actors and make the most of their time (Juenke 2005).<sup>4</sup> Their expertise may encourage networking based on the interactions they view as crucial to their performance. We operationalize superintendent experience with a continuous variable that captures superintendent's responses to "How long have you been superintendent in any district?" We measure superintendent experience in years. Next, we control for school district size measured by the logged district enrollment. Superintendents who work in large school districts are likely to be mobile executives and to seek promotion, which is often leads to increased political activity (Teodoro 2011). District performance is also included, measured by the percentage of students in the district who have passed all state standardized exams. As superintendents are expected to show improved performance each year, poorer performance may trigger superintendents to engage in networking as a means to improve performance and/or build political allies to protect their jobs (see Walker et al. 2010 who find this for English local governments). Student demographic populations are also expected to influence superintendent behaviors. In this case, residential segregation in Texas schools has created a context where the majority of racial minority superintendents work in

majority Black and Latino districts. We measure student demographic population by the percentage of Black and the percentage of Latino students in the district. Because potential task-difficulty may also interact with superintendents' ability to engage in networking, we control for the low-income student population. We also control for district wealth, operationalized by the logged revenue per pupil allotted to the district each year. We expect that buffering patterns will prevail and overall networking behaviors will be greater in districts with fewer resources (O'Toole and Meier 2011).

## **Results**

### *Descriptive Results*

Before investigating the individual behaviors of top managers, it is fair to ask if there is any reason to believe that minority top executives might have greater incentives to engage in strategic behavior relative to their nonminority counterparts. This is a valid concern because superintendents do not have job security and must build political support both on the school board and in the community to maintain their positions (Boyd, Crowson, and Mawhinney 2015; Carter and Cunningham 1997; Johnson 1996). Several years of the survey asked school superintendents how they would rate school board support and community support for their district. Respondents were prompted by the following question: "How would you rate the following in your district: ..." and respondents separately rated "school board support" and "community support" on a scale of "1" (inadequate) to "4" (excellent). Next, the survey asked superintendents, "How important do you see the following in your district: Standardized test scores." Superintendents responded on a scale of 1-4, where a response of "1" reflects "not important" and "4" reflects "most important". Last, we asked superintendents to rate their

agreement with a statement that summarized the role of superintendents: “A superintendent should act as an administrator and leave policy matters to the school board.” The respondents were given a scale of “1” (strongly disagree) to “4” (strongly agree) to rate their agreement.<sup>5</sup>

The results in Table 3 show that minority superintendents, especially African-American superintendents perceive lower support among the school board and significantly lower support in the community. The first column of table 1 shows Black superintendents are most likely to perceive “below average” school board support and white superintendents are the least likely to give this response. However, the opposite exists for responses of “excellent” school board support. Column 3 of Table 3 presents that white superintendents are more likely than Latinos and Blacks to perceive “excellent” school board support; Black superintendents are least likely to offer this response.

[Table 2 About Here]

Columns 4-6 of Table 3 presents the superintendent’s perception of community support by race/ethnicity. Column 4 in Table 3 indicates that Black superintendents are more likely than Latino and white superintendents to perceive “below average” community support. Column 6 of Table 3 highlights again that white superintendents are most likely to perceive “excellent” community support. There is a drastic difference in the perception of Black superintendents as they are the least likely superintendents to perceive “excellent” community support. And the results of a chi-squared test indicate that there are statistically significant differences in responses across racial groups. Similar to perceptions of political support, Latino superintendents fall between white and Black superintendents in perceptions of community support. However, Latino

superintendents do closely resemble their white peers in their perception of community support. The small difference between Latino and white superintendents may be a function of the Texas context where the Latino community has a longstanding political presence that provides Latino executives the opportunity to develop more positive political and community relations. Nonetheless, minority superintendents, particularly Black superintendents, see lower support within their political environment and significantly lower support in the community. This perception should logically create the incentives to act strategically to build greater board and community support.

Our first hypothesis is that minority school superintendents will respond to organizational pressures and behave similarly to white superintendents on highly visible activities. We test this hypothesis by examining how superintendents perceive the importance of standardized tests, how they see their role as a policymaker versus an implementer, how they engage in public networking behavior. Without question during this time period of high stakes testing, an area where the state of Texas was a role model for national policy, the most important priority was student performance on standardized tests. Table 4 presents the importance of standardized test performance and beliefs on district policymaking for superintendents by race. A small percentage of superintendents rated student standardized test scores of no or low importance. However, these responses are clear outliers as most superintendents say this standard is either “important” or “most important” in their district. Table 4 shows approximately 93%, 100%, and 94% of white, Black, and Latino superintendents, respectively ranked standardized test scores in their district as important or most important. Likewise, the insignificant chi-squared test indicates that there are no statistical differences across groups in their responses. In short, minority

superintendents strongly supported the need for good performance on standardized tests just as white superintendents did.

[Table 3 About Here]

The second visible role is whether superintendents see themselves as “acting as an administrator and leaving policy to the school board.” Columns 5-8 of Table 4 presents the superintendents’ perceptions of their role in policy. The insignificant chi-squared test indicates no significant difference across race in superintendents’ perceptions of their role. The majority of all superintendents disagree or strongly disagree that superintendents should act as administrators and leave policy to the school board (see Column 1 and 2). Among Black, Latino, and white superintendents very few (<10%) strongly agree that a superintendent’s role is more of an administrator. Given the stress experienced by school superintendents who must lead a district alongside a part-time school board, it is not surprising that minority superintendents and white superintendents reject the administrator role; there are no significant differences among the superintendents in this visible activity.

### *Empirical Results*

Next, we explore if there are differences in visible managerial behaviors such as, networking. Given our factor analysis results, we explore two networking groups: professional networking and peer networking. Beginning with professional networking, Table 5, column 1 shows that there is no statistically significant difference between the networking behaviors of racial minority superintendents and white superintendents. While it appears that Black superintendents, on average, may network less than their white peers may, the effect is not



statistically significant. Three of the control variables we include are statistically significant. Increases in revenue per pupil and increases in district size both result in increased superintendent networking. Increases in superintendent experience lead to *reduced* superintendent networking, which suggests that more experienced superintendents spend less of their time networking than superintendents who are new to their position. This model as well as the two previous findings support hypothesis 1 that minority managers are ‘managing organizational demands’ and engage in similar activities in terms of the priorities they hold, the perception of their role in setting policy, and their networking behavior in patterns identical to their white peers.

Table 5, column 2 illustrates the relationship between superintendent race and peer networking. Different than professional networking, on average, Latino superintendents engage in less networking with other superintendents than their white peers. Similar to other networking types, Black superintendents are no more or less likely to engage with peers. While the significant differences found here among Latino and white superintendents are surprising, the results are in support of previous literature on networking among peers of different racial groups (Ibarra 1995). Historically administrators of color have experienced feelings of isolation and lack of inclusion in peer professional networks. The negative relationship found here may be capturing the bias that exists in the development and continuation of peer network relationships.

[Table 5 About Here]

Table 6 explores if racial differences in managerial behaviors are present in less visible processes in the organization, such as hiring minority bureaucrats. Our second hypothesis

expects that Black and Latino superintendents will discretely affect policy by increasing the minority bureaucrats in their organization. The results offer support for this hypothesis. Even when controlling for past representation of minority teachers, the presence of a Black superintendent, on average, contributes to an annual 1.5 % increase in Black teachers in their district compared to white superintendents. By controlling for last year's Black teachers, the coefficient indicates the average short run or yearly effect of Black superintendents compared to their white peers. This effect is statistically significant with a p-value less than 0.01. This growth is particularly noteworthy since the number of Black teachers is decreasing both nationally and in many school districts across Texas. Table 6 also presents a similar analysis that focuses on the relationship between Latino superintendents and the percent of Latino teachers. The results in the second column of Table 6 also offer support for Hypothesis 2. The presence of Latino superintendents contributes to an annual, statistically significant increase (1.6%) in Latino teachers compared to white superintendents. This increase is statistically significant with a p-value less than 0.01.

[Table 6 About Here]

Many of the control variables are statistically significant in the results presented in Table 6. In both models 1 and 2, there is a statistically significant relationship between the percent of Black and Latino students and the percentage of minority teachers. An increase in each of these percentages leads to an increase in the percent of Black teachers and Latino teachers, except an increase in Black students, which leads to a reduction in the percent of Latino teachers. Table 6 shows that the percent of Black teachers and Latino teachers decreases as student performance

improves but increases due to increased district size. By controlling for the district characteristics, we account for district environments contributing to increased minority teacher representation. Taken together, these results reveal a statistically significant relationship between Black and Latino superintendents and offer support for our expectation that minority managers behave differently than their white peers in less visible activities such as, putting teachers in place who will likely influence policies that potentially benefit their racial community.

### **Discussion**

Herbert (1974) contends that racial minority managers face different pressures than their white peers. In the face of an organization with strong socialization pressures, these differences may lead to a goal conflict for managers of color. While scholars (Murray, Terry, Washington and Keller 1994) have previously addressed this conflict with the assumption that managers choose to represent the interests of the organization and forsake community interests or pursue the interests of one's community and dismiss organizational values, this research indicates that this is an incorrect assumption. Instead, minority managers appear to behave strategically and deal with the two goals separately.

First, when it comes to goals of the organization, our empirical results find that minority managers perceive the organization's goals and their role in the organization similarly to that of white managers. Descriptive tests indicate that there are no differences in minority and white superintendents' perceptions of standardized performance scores and, that both minority and non-minority superintendents perceive their role to be policymakers more than administrators. Similarly, regression analysis indicates that regardless of a superintendent's race, superintendents engage in visible managerial practices like professional networking in similar ways to their

peers. Our empirical models for networking include control variables that account for the characteristics of the district that make up the policy environment and will influence network engagement. The results indicate that even when working in extremely different districts, organizational values and similarities in role expectations may promote similar behaviors among superintendents in their professional interactions.

When considering peer networks our results support previous research on the lack of network availability for minority administrators (Ibarra 1995). Specifically, our results indicate differences among Latino superintendents and their white peers in networking with other superintendents. Because interactions with other superintendents represents an informal network, we cannot assume individuals of all racial groups have equal access.

Second, while managing organizational expectations, minority managers are advocating for minority interests. Our empirical analysis demonstrates that minority managers pursue significantly different behaviors in ways that promote important policy outcomes. Empirical evidence finds that Black and Latino superintendents address their ‘personal commitment to community’ by staffing the organization with individuals who are generally associated with improved minority student performance. The presence of a Black manager is associated with an annual increase in Black teachers by 1.5% on average and Latino managers are associated with a 1.6% annual increase in Latino teachers. For comparison purposes, in 2015-2016, Black teachers in Texas made up 6.7% of the state’s teaching population and Latino teachers made up 8 percent of all teachers.<sup>6</sup> If on average a superintendent of color can increase representation among both groups by more than 1 percentage point, minority managers can make a substantive impact on the organization in ways that benefit same-race clients and the organization overall. Given the fact that minority students rarely have access to the role-model effects presented by same-race

teachers and having a same-race teacher will increase minority students' likelihood of graduating and going to college (Gershenson et al 2018), increasing the proportion of minority teachers can impact the outcomes and future directions of an organization. As these findings use the personnel process as an example of minority administrative behaviors, we might similarly expect minority managers to demonstrate their commitment to community by advocating for less punitive discipline policies or encouraging culturally-responsive curriculum.

### *Conclusions*

Although minority managers may experience goal conflict, our results find that this goal conflict does not distract from the individual's goals or those of the organization. Instead, racial minority managers can strategically balance the goals of the organization with those of their community. Our findings imply that as managers of colors behave according to the values and perspectives associated with their diverse identities, they must bring diplomatic approaches to public managerial strategy. This finding provides increased support for the hiring of minority managers. In the majority of cases, the benefits that come to the organization via advocacy for same-race clients, will often improve outcomes for white students and the organization as well (Meier 1993). However, pressuring managers to adhere solely to the values and goals instilled through organizational socialization may actually limit the abilities of racial minority managers to use their diverse perspectives to address organizational needs. Organizations, therefore, should consider the ways in which they may be limiting minority managers from pursuing community interests by presenting the goals of the organization and anything beyond that, including the interests of one's community, as opposite pursuits.

Although this research has demonstrated the effect of race on managerial behaviors in the case of school superintendents, it is limited in some ways and these limitations provide directions for future work. Primarily, it is not lost on us that many minority administrators lack access to some social and professional networks (Ibarra 1995). While we attempt to address this by including network actors with whom managers are connected regardless of race, we are still considerate of this as a potential limiting factor. In addition, the data has limited us to using representative bureaucracy as an example of “advocating for minority interests,” While we would welcome the use of survey or administrative data that records policy changes across districts or in the least administrator’s support for culturally-responsive policies, the availability of such data is limited. Thus, future directions of this work may look to understand the direct link between minority superintendents and the hiring of minority principals, changes in discipline, or implementation culturally responsive policies. Last, throughout this research, we have spoken of both Latino and Black bureaucrats as minorities who similarly develop values and behave in ways that are influenced by their racial identity. But it is worth noting that race and ethnicity may not operate identically and in fact Blacks and Latinos have uniquely different experiences. These different experiences, such as the longstanding Latino community in Texas and the variation among Latino political perspectives, may result in fewer similarities between Black and Latino public administrators. While this research has included both groups as they represent the largest number of traditionally disadvantaged minorities, future work would benefit from exploring the differences within administrators of color and how these differences manifest in administrative behavior.

In spite of these limitations, this research contributes to our understanding of race, organizational socialization, and how minority administrators strategically balance seemingly

conflicting interests and values within public institutions. We believe this study can be generalizable to managers in various organizational contexts; in particular, public health organizations and law enforcement agencies provide interesting contexts for exploration. Public health and law enforcement executives are similarly influenced by strong organizational or professional socialization, public pressures, and standardized goals of performance. In these industries, we expect minority managers may equally perceive a role conflict. But when given the discretion to act, minority managers will ‘manage the demands of the organization” and ‘advocate for the interests of their community’.

### Notes

1. Superintendent certification information gather from the Texas Education Agency, Certified Superintendent Demographics by Preparation Route 2013-2017 ([https://tea.texas.gov/Reports\\_and\\_Data/Educator\\_Data/Educator\\_Reports\\_and\\_Data/](https://tea.texas.gov/Reports_and_Data/Educator_Data/Educator_Reports_and_Data/)).
2. See Appendix for response rates for each respective year.
3. Because more networking actors are included over time, our networking measure only includes the network actors who are in every wave of the survey. The data indicate that the average superintendent overall networking value declined each year; the individual year fixed effects control for this trend.
4. It may be argued that the historical discrimination experienced by people of color in education may result in racial minority superintendents having overall less experience. The correlation coefficient between race and superintendent experience is -0.09.
5. Each survey item was not included in every year of the survey. Questions asking superintendents of the importance of standardized exams were only asked in 2000. Additional survey items on perceptions and beliefs were included in 2000, 2002, 2005, and 2007.
6. Teacher demographics gathered from the Texas Association of School Board. (<https://www.tasb.org/Services/HR-Services/HRX/Recruiting-and-Hiring/Teacher-Demographics-and-Diversity-Challenges.aspx>).



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## Tables

Table 1: Factors loadings for Network Actors

	Factor 1	Factor 2
School Board	0.48	0.27
Teachers Associations	0.55	-0.44
Parent Groups	0.56	-0.49
Other Superintendents	0.51	0.62
Federal Education Officials	0.58	-0.23
State Legislators	0.62	0.29
Texas Education Agency	0.59	0.04
Eigenvalue	2.18	1.03

Table 2: Summary Statistics

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Percent Black Teachers	3.34	6.95	0	93
Lagged Black Teachers	2.99	6.51	0	93
Percent Latino teachers	10.73	19.13	0	100
Lagged Latino teachers	9.84	18.75	0	100
Networking	3.00	.48	1.57	5.286
Black	.02	.14	0	1
Latino	.07	.26	0	1
White	.91	.33	0	1
Revenue per pupil (logged)	9.17	.27	7.47	11.34
Performance	74.27	12.38	21	100
Percent Black students	7.95	11.35	0	87
Percent Latino students	32.95	26.30	0	100
Percent Low-income students	52.68	19.13	0	100
Superintendent Exp.	4.89	4.51	0	40
District Enrollment (logged)	7.11	1.50	2.996	12.20

Table 3: Perceptions of Support by Race of Superintendent

	“How would you rate the following in your district: School Board Support?”			“How would you rate the following in your district: Community Support”		
	(1) Below Average	(2) Average	(3) Excellent	(4) Below Average	(5) Average	(6) Excellent
White	3.48	9.82	86.71	6.38	25.23	68.39
Black	4.48	17.91	77.62	19.70	42.42	37.88
Latino	3.65	10.33	86.01	6.25	31.25	62.5
Observations		2545			2545	
Chi2		10.56			35.69	
Pr		0.032			0.000	

Table 4: Perceptions of Standardized testing and Role in Policy by Race

“How important do you see the following in your district: Standardized Test Scores”					“A superintendent should act as an administrator and leave policy matters to the school board.”			
	(1) Not Important	(2) Low Importance	(3) Important	(4) Most Important	(5) Strongly Disagree	(6) Disagree	(7) Agree	(8) Strongly Agree
White	1.43	5.31	47.14	46.12	22.39	52.01	20.99	4.61
Black	0	0	50	50	20.83	56.25	14.58	8.33
Latino	0	5.71	40	54.29	23.13	44.78	23.88	8.21
Observations	531				1897			
Chi2	1.76				7.41			
Pr	0.94				0.285			

Table 5: The Influence of Race on Managerial Networking Behavior

VARIABLES	(1) Professional Networking	(2) Peer Networking
Black Superintendent	-0.08 (0.14)	-0.05 (0.14)
Latino Superintendent	0.03 (0.08)	-0.32*** (0.08)
Revenue per pupil	0.34*** (0.11)	-0.09 (0.12)
Performance	0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Black students	0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)
Latino students	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00** (0.00)
Low-income students	0.00 (0.00)	0.00** (0.00)
Experience	-0.01*** (0.00)	0.01 (0.00)
District size	0.13*** (0.02)	-0.04 (0.02)
2005	0.27*** (0.08)	0.03 (0.09)
2007	0.13** (0.07)	0.07 (0.08)
2009	-0.18** (0.08)	0.34*** (0.08)
2011	-0.43*** (0.08)	0.17** (0.08)
2014	-0.44*** (0.07)	0.27** (0.07)
Constant	-4.02** (1.09)	0.61 (1.12)
Observations	3,220	3,220
R-squared	0.10	0.04

Robust standard errors in parentheses.

\*\*\* p&lt;0.01, \*\* p&lt;0.05, \* p&lt;0.1

Table 6: The Influence of Superintendent Race on Hiring of Minority Teachers

VARIABLES	(1) % Black Teachers	(2) % Latino Teachers
Lagged Black teachers	0.92*** (0.02)	-
Lagged Latino teachers	-	0.94*** (0.01)
Black Superintendent	1.45*** (0.46)	0.11 (0.25)
Latino Superintendent	-0.11 (0.10)	1.56*** (0.58)
Revenue per pupil	0.21 (0.14)	0.28 (0.40)
Performance	-0.01* (0.00)	-0.02** (0.01)
Black Students	0.04*** (0.01)	-0.01* (0.01)
Latino Students	0.00** (0.00)	0.04*** (0.00)
Low-income Students	-0.01** (0.00)	-0.00 (0.01)
Experience	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
District size	0.07* (0.04)	0.27*** (0.07)
2005	-0.28** (0.12)	-0.16 (0.27)
2007	-0.06 (0.12)	-0.21 (0.21)
2009	-0.02 (0.11)	0.05 (0.24)
2011	-0.20* (0.12)	-0.01 (0.27)
2014	0.29** (0.14)	0.44** (0.22)
Constant	-1.50 (1.55)	-2.64 (3.80)
Observations	3,308	3,308
R-squared	0.95	0.98

Robust standard errors in parentheses.

\*\*\* p&lt;0.01, \*\* p&lt;0.05, \* p&lt;0.1



**Appendix**

Superintendent Survey Response Rate	
2000	52%
2002	60%
2005	61%
2007	67%
2009	58%
2011	54.2%
2014	43.7%